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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 001524

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FOR EUR, NEA, EUR/WE, PM, PA, CENTCOM POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/09/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [IT](#) [ITPREL](#) [ITPREL](#) [IRAQI](#) [FREEDOM](#)

SUBJECT: TFI01: UPDATE ON ITALIAN JOURNALISTS IN BAGHDAD
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REF: ROME 1506

CLASSIFIED BY: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION EMIL SKODON FOR REASONS 1.5 (B)
AND (D).

1. (SBU) EARLY ON APRIL 9 MFA SECRETARY GENERAL'S CHIEF OF STAFF, ANTONIO ZANARDI LANDI, SPOKE TO DCM TO FOLLOW UP PREVIOUS EVENING'S APPROACH RE SAFETY OF ITALIAN JOURNALISTS IN BAGHDAD (REFTEL). DCM ADVISED THAT WE HAD PASSED ON GOI CONCERNS TO DEPARTMENT AND TO CENTCOM, AND REAFFIRMED THAT U.S. FORCES WERE DOING ALL THEY COULD TO AVOID CIVILIAN CASUALTIES. DRAWING ON BACKGROUND RECEIVED FROM TASK FORCE, DCM ALSO TOLD ZANARDI LANDI THAT THE SITUATION IN BAGHDAD WAS VERY FLUID AS OF DAYBREAK IN IRAQ, AND IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS FOR ALL CONCERNED FOR U.S. FORCES TO TRY AND EVACUATE JOURNALISTS FROM THE PALESTINE OR SHERATON HOTELS. THAT SAID, THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND WAS CHANGING RAPIDLY TODAY AND CENTCOM WOULD ADJUST AS THE ENVIRONMENT EVOLVED.

2. (C) ZANARDI LANDI SAID THAT GOI HAD MANAGED TO REACH THE ITALIAN JOURNALISTS IN BAGHDAD AND HAD ASKED THEIR INTENTIONS, AS REQUESTED BY DCM. THE SEVEN WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED BY IRAQI OFFICIALS AND DETAINED IN THE PALESTINE HOTEL ADVISED THAT IRAQI AUTHORITIES HAD PROMISED TO RETURN THEIR PASSPORTS AND RELEASE THEM ON APRIL 9, AND ONCE THAT HAPPENED THEY WISHED TO DEPART BAGHDAD. THE OTHER THIRTEEN ITALIAN MEDIA REPS AT THE PALESTINE AND SHERATON HOTELS PLANNED TO STAY TO COVER THE BATTLE. DCM ASKED ZANARDI LANDI FOR NAMES AND MEDIA AFFILIATIONS OF THE SEVEN WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND ALSO FOR THE OTHER ITALIAN JOURNALISTS IN
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BAGHDAD, WHICH HE AGREED TO PROVIDE.

3. (C) LATER IN THE DAY, WHILE ACCOMPANYING U/S BOLTON TO A CALL ON MFA SEC GEN BALDOCCI, DCM ASKED BALDOCCI FOR AN UPDATE ON THE JOURNALISTS. BALDOCCI SAID THE IRAQIS HAD RETURNED PASSPORTS TO THE SEVEN ARRESTEES, AS PROMISED, AND INDICATED THEY WERE FREE TO LEAVE. GIVEN THE DAY'S FAST-MOVING EVENTS, HOWEVER, THEY HAD DECIDED TO FOLLOW THEIR JOURNALISTIC INSTINCTS AND REMAIN IN BAGHDAD. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, EMBASSY ODC CHIEF RECEIVED A CALL FROM GOI MILITARY CONTACTS TO SAY THAT THERE WAS NO NEED TO PURSUE THE PREVIOUS DAY'S REQUEST FOR DATA ON THE FEASIBILITY OF AN IAF C-130J LANDING AT BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL TO EVACUATE THE JOURNALISTS.

4. (C) WHILE THE ABOVE CONVERSATIONS WERE TAKING PLACE, ZANARDI LANDI FAXED US THE DETAILS OF ALL ITALIAN JOURNALISTS CURRENTLY IN IRAQ. ALTHOUGH THE ITALIANS DESIRE TO ESCAPE THE FIGHTING IN BAGHDAD HAS APPARENTLY BEEN OVERTAKEN BY THE DAY'S EVENTS, WE REPEAT BELOW THEIR IDENTIFYING DETAILS AS GIVEN US BY ZANARDI LANDI IN CASE THEY MAY BE OF ANY USE TO CENTCOM:

JOURNALISTS DETAINED BY THE IRAQI AUTHORITIES:

FRANCESCO BATTISTINI
CORRIERE DELLA SERA
HOTEL PALESTINE

EZIO PASERO
MESSAGGERO
HOTEL PALESTINE

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LORENZO BIANCHI
LA NAZIONE -- IL RESTO DEL CARLINO -- IL GIORNO
HOTEL PALESTINE

IL GIORNALE
LUCIANO GULLI
HOTEL PALESTINE

IL MATTINO
VITTORIO DELL'UVA
HOTEL PALESTINE

L'UNITA'
ANTONIO FONTANA
HOTEL PALESTINE

IL SOLE 24 ORE
LEONARDO MAISANO
HOTEL PALESTINE

OTHER JOURNALISTS AT THE PALESTINE HOTEL:

FERDINANDO PELLEGRINI

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DOTE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EAP-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	VC-00	TEDE-00
	INR-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-02	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00
	SCT-00	SP-00	SSO-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-01	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/005W

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O 091641Z APR 03
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9184
INFO NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL FLORENCE IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL MILAN IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL NAPLES IMMEDIATE
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
HQ EUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

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RAI

GIOVANNA BOTTERI
GUIDO CRAVERO
RAI

LILLI GRUBER
ENRICO BELLANO
RAI

LORENZO CREMONESI
CORRIERE DELLA SERA

GIOVANNI PORZIO
PANORAMA

ANNA MIGOTTO
ANTONIO SANTILLO
RETE 4

GABRIELLA SIMONI
ITALIA 1 (STUDIO APERTO)

STEFANO BETTOZZI (OPERATOR)
ITALIA 1 (STUDIO APERTO)

ROBERTO DE AMICIS
LA 7

CLAUDIO MONICI
AVVENIRE

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FRANCO ERNESTO PAGETTI
ESPRESSO

PIETRO GIGLI
FREELANCE

OTHER JOURNALISTS AT THE SHERATON HOTEL:

MASSIMO NAVA
CORRIERE DELLA SERA

GRANATA PRESS

ELIO COLAVOLPE
FREELANCE

ALESSIO VINCI
CNN

ANGELO MACCHIARELLO
SALVATORE LA BARBERA
ITALIA 1 (STUDIO APERTO)

RENZO CIANFANELLO
CORRIERE DELLA SERA

PAOLO PELLEGRIN
NEWSWEEK
SEMBLER

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